

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00
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R 141730Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1303
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 4770

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR SO ET IT
SUBJECT: ITALIAN VIEWS ON WITHDRAWAL IN THE HORN

REF: STATE 63251

1. SUMMARY: ITALIANS BELIEVE SOMALI WITHDRAWAL FROM OGADEN
IS PROCEEDING RAPIDLY BUT ARE CONCERNED ABOUT REPRISALS AND
ABOUT POTENTIAL REFUGEE PROBLEMS. THEY HAVE MADE REPRESENTA-
TIONS TO CUBANS, AND PLAN TO DO SO TO SOVIETS, TO URGE THEIR
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WITHDRAWAL. GOI IS ALSO APPROACHING NIGERIANS URGING MAXI-
MUM EFFORTS AT MARCH 16 MEETING. ITALIANS PLAN TO GIVE ECO-
NOMIC AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO SOMALIS BUT DO NOT
EXPECT TO SELL MILITARY EQUIPMENT FOR THE TIME BEING.
END SUMMARY.

2. IN MARCH 14 CONVERSATION, MFA DIRECTOR FOR AFRICAN

AFFAIRS RACHELE SAID THAT ITALIANS BELIEVE THAT SOMALI WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OGADEN IS PROCEEDING RAPIDLY AND DO NOT EXPECT CONTINUED LARGE-SCALE RESISTANCE ON THE PART OF OGADENI IRREGULARS. ITALIANS ARE WORRIED ABOUT ETHIOPIAN REPRISALS AGAINST OGADEN POPULATION AND UNDERSTAND THAT MANY INHABITANTS ARE FLEEING INTO SOMALIA. THESE REFUGEES COULD CONSTITUTE MAJOR PROBLEM NOT ONLY FROM HUMANITARIAN BUT ALSO FROM POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW. IF THEIR NEEDS ARE NOT MET, THEY ARE LIKELY TO DEVELOP INTO A DISRUPTIVE, IRREDENTIST MOVEMENT IN SOMALIA WHICH WILL TRY TO FORCE GSDR TO RENEW EFFORTS TO GAIN OGADEN.

3. MEANWHILE, GOI HAS BEEN URGING NIGERIANS TO MAKE MAXIMUM EFFORT IN COMING DAYS WITHIN CONTEXT OF OAU MEDIATION COMMITTEE. IMMEDIATE GOALS ARE CEASEFIRE AND BEGINNING OF DIRECT TALKS BETWEEN SOMALIS AND ETHIOPIANS. ITALIANS ARE PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS TO SEE CREATION OF OBSERVER GROUP OF SOME KIND TO AVERT FURTHER BLOODSHED. WHILE THEY HOPE THAT EFFORT TO CONSTITUTE OBSERVER GROUP CAN BE CAST AS EVEN-HANDED ATTEMPT TO PREVENT ETHIOPIAN REPRISALS ON THE ONE HAND AND SOMALI INFILTRATION BACK INTO OGADEN ON THE OTHER, ITALIANS ARE WORRIED THAT ETHIOPIANS WILL PERCEIVE IT AS ONE-SIDED EFFORT DIRECTED AGAINST THEM AND WILL CONSEQUENTLY REJECT IT.

4. ACCORDING TO RACHELE, ITALIANS HAVE TALKED TO CUBANS
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AND PLAN TO APPROACH SOVIETS AS WELL, ABOUT TROOP WITHDRAWALS FROM THE HORN. GOI HAS REMINDED CUBANS OF THEIR STATEMENTS THAT THEY WOULD ENCOURAGE DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN SOMALIS AND ETHIOPIANS IMMEDIATELY AFTER SOMALI WITHDRAWAL AND OF THEIR COMMITMENT NOT TO SUPPORT ETHIOPIAN EFFORT IN ERITREA. RACHELE, CITING LONGSTANDING CUBAN COMMITMENT TO ERITREANS, ADDED THAT ITALIANS BELIEVE THAT SOVIETS ARE PUTTING CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE ON CUBANS TO GET THEM TO JOIN IN HELPING ETHIOPIANS "RESOLVE" ERITREAN PROBLEM. IN THE MEANTIME, THE SUDANESE ARE WORKING FOR UNIFICATION OF ERITREAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS IN PREPARATION FOR POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS WITH ETHIOPIANS (IN KHARTOUM OR ELSEWHERE) SHOULD SOVIET AND CUBAN SUPPORT FOR EPMG IN ERITREA FAIL TOMATERIALIZE.

5. THE GOI, ACCORDING TO RACHELE, INTENDS TO MAINTAIN ITS POLICY OF NOT SUPPLYING ARMS TO EITHER SIDE UNTIL THERE IS REAL PEACE IN THE HORN. TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE WILL, HOWEVER, BE PROVIDED.

6. AS TO QUESTION OF SIAD BARRE CHOOSING BETWEEN US AND SOVIET PLANS FOR WITHDRAWAL (REFTEL), ITALIANS BELIEVE

(BASED BOTH ON WHAT THEY HEARD FROM JAMA BARRE AFTER SIAD
BARRE'S VISIT TO TRIPOLI AND ON THEIR OWN SUPPOSITIONS) THAT
QADHAFI DID COMMUNICATE TO SOMALIS A SOVIET PROPOSAL ALONG
LINES MENTIONED IN PRESS ACCOUNTS. ITALIANS THINK THAT
IN VIEW OF CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS SOVIETS WOULD HAVE HAD
TO MAKE TO CONVINCE ETHIOPIANS TO MAKE CONCESSIONS IN ORDER TO
GET SOMALI WITHDRAWAL, SOVIETS DEMANDED A GREAT DEAL
FROM SOMALIS--TOO MUCH FOR SIAD BARRE TO ACCEPT,
ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF STRONG ANTI-SOVIET PUBLIC OPINION IN
SOMALIA. GARDNER

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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